

# THE EARLY POETRY OF ROBERT EMMET

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## ERIN'S CALL

Brothers arise! Our country calls—  
Let us gain her rights or die;  
In her cause who nobly falls,  
Decked with brightest wreaths shall lie;  
And freedom's genius o'er his bier  
Shall place the wreath and drop a tear.

Long by England's power opprest,  
Groaning long beneath her chain,  
England's ill-used power detest;  
Burst her yoke; your rights regain;  
The standard raise to liberty—  
Ireland, you shall be free!

Brothers, march, march on to glory—  
In your country's cause unite;  
Freedom's blessing see before you—  
Erin's sons, for freedom fight:  
England's legions we defy  
We swear to conquer or to die.

# THE LONDON PRIDE AND SHAMROCK

## *A FABLE*

Full many a year, close side by side,  
A shamrock grew and London pride:  
Together how they came to grow  
I do not care, nor do I know;  
But this I know, that overhead  
A laurel cast a wholesome shade.  
The shamrock was of lovely green  
In early days as e'er was seen;  
And she had many a hardy son  
In days of old, but they are gone—  
For soon the other's creeping shoots  
Did steal themselves around Shamrock's roots.  
Then, thief-like, fastened in her soil,  
And sucked the sap of poor Trefoil;  
Until in time pert London pride  
Got up so high as quite to hide  
Poor shamrock, who could seldom see  
The sun's bright face, nor seen was she,  
Save when an adverse blast did blow,  
And laid her neighbour's honours low.  
Then, in the angry lady's spite,  
She drank the show'r, she saw the light,  
She bath'd her sicklied charms in dew,  
And gathered health and strength anew.  
She saw those joys had come from heaven  
And ne'er were by her neighbour given;  
Yet, her good nature aye to prove,  
She paid her jealous hate with love.  
But when once more kind zephyrs came,  
And raised the o'ergrown, storm-bent dame,

The ingrate strove her all to take,  
And forced poor shamrock thus to speak:  
‘Neighbour, we’re born with equal right  
To feel yon sun and see his light,  
T’enjoy the blessings of this earth  
Or if right follows prior birth,  
In this still stronger is my claim—  
Long was I known and great my fame,  
Before the world e’er heard thy name.  
But letting all these strong claims lie,  
Pray tell me, is it policy,  
To thwart my offspring as they rise,  
To break my heart, to blind their eyes?  
Sure if they spread the earth along,  
Grow handsome, healthy, stout and strong,  
They will as usual happy be  
To lend that useful strength to thee:  
Thus would we keep each other warm,  
And guard us from all coming harm;  
We’d steady stand when wild winds blow,  
And laugh in spite of frost and snow,  
And guard the roots of our loved laurel,  
Grown sick and pale to see us quarrel.’  
‘No more!’ the vex’d virago cries,  
Wild fury flashing from her eyes,  
‘I’ll hear no more—your bounds I’ll mark,  
And keep you ever in the dark;  
Here is a circle—look you here—  
One step beyond it if you dare!  
And if I hear you more complain  
I’ll tear thy rising heart in twain;  
I’ve made thy sons kill one another,  
And soon they shall destroy their mother.  
I’ll thus’—a flash of heavenly fire,  
Full fraught with Jove’s most deadly ire,

Scatter'd the London pride around;  
The black clouds roar'd with horrid sound;  
The vivid lightning flashed again,  
And laid the laurel on the plain.  
But soon succeeds a heavenly calm—  
Soft dews descend and show'rs of balm—  
The sun shoots forth its kindest ray,  
And shamrock strengthens every day,  
And, raise'd by heaven's assistance bland,  
Bids fair to spread o'er all the land;  
She guards the blasted laurel's roots,  
The nurtur'd laurel upward shoots,  
And grateful wreaths its dark green boughs  
To grace great shamrock's aged brows.

### *MORAL*

Take heed, learn wisdom hence, weak man,  
And keep a good friend while you can;  
If to your friend you are unkind,  
E'en love will be against you join'd;  
Reflect that every act you do  
To strengthen him doth strengthen you;  
To serve you he is willing—able—  
Two twists will make the strongest cable,  
To bind a friend and keep him steady,  
To have him e'er in reach and ready.

## THE TWO SHIPS

### *A FABLE*

*Et ergo malim audire tales fabulas*

*Quam experiri—Naufrag. Eras.*

A ship that weathered many a gale,  
With oft-fished mast and tattered sail,  
And many a shot, and many a scar,  
That she received in deadly war;  
Afraid of ev'ry angry cloud  
Of breeze that whistled thro' a shroud;  
O'erburdened, lab'ring, heaving, creaking,  
In danger every wave of wrecking.  
Thus to a vessel stout and tight  
That constant had kept close in sight;  
And ev'ry gale had lent assistance,  
Or when the foe kept not his distance.  
'Your crew, good ship, you can't deny,  
Is tainted strong with mutiny;  
Now mine is loyal, if you mix 'em  
We'll make to honest crews betwixt 'em.  
And that we may keep close together,  
And stoutly face all sorts of weather,  
We'll tow you by the strongest cable  
That to devise my crew is able.  
And if you leave it to my master,  
We both shall sail more safe and faster.  
As to our burden, though you'll share it  
His skill will give you strength to bear it.  
My solemn faith shall plighted be,  
Your share I'll just apportioned see—  
And to your strength your load I'll square,  
Nor stow a pound you cannot bear.

A common fate we then shall have,  
Together mount the boisterous wave;  
Or down the wat'ry vale so low  
Together we shall cheerful go.  
The storm, dear ship, that injures you  
Shall sink thy constant comrade too.'  
The trim-built vessel thus replied,  
As proud she wrote upon the tide:  
'I know I have on board some men,  
That seem rebellious now and then,  
But what's the cause? You know full well—  
Allowance short—makes men rebel;  
And you have many a hand of mine  
That on my crew's provision dine;  
Each day on biscuit we must work,  
Forsooth to send you beef and pork.  
Send me my men, their pay and stores,  
Cease to rip up our healing sores,  
In honour and in wisdom's name,  
Help me, some prudent plan to frame,  
To gain a happy crew's affection;—  
Blow it, 'twill be thy own protection,  
Our ship we'll work, its deck we'll clear,  
Nor wind, nor wave, nor both we'll fear.  
As to the tow-rope I am loath  
To try it, for 'twill hurt us both;  
A course for you's no course for me,  
Our trims are diff'rent as can be;  
But I shall, as I'm wont to do,  
Keep constant company with you,  
And overboard the traitor-hearted  
Shall go—that wish to see us parted;  
But I perceive 'tis my crew's mind  
By ropes we never should be joined.'  
'Twas all in vain—a scoundrel few

About the helm, betrayed the crew;  
And for a bounty, basely gotten,  
Lash'd the sound vessel to the rotten.  
No sooner was this fouled deed done  
Then slap on board comes ton on ton  
Of cargo—a most grievous burden,  
Ten times as much as she'd her name on;  
A storm comes on—a dreadful blast,  
Now goes a sail! now groans a mast!  
The silvery waves in mountains curled  
Now wrap them in the wat'ry world!  
Shot on the billow, now they rise,  
And seem to penetrate the skies.  
Their heaving sides with frightful crash  
The rolling ships together dash;  
The tight-built ship now 'gan to think  
That thus united both must sink;  
And better 'twas that they should part  
For ever, than a plank should start.  
To save herself, nought else was left,  
She cut the rope, and sent adrift  
The crazy ship, to live at sea  
Well as she could and bore away.



## HELP FROM HEAVEN

‘The right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass—  
the Lord has chastened and corrected me; but he hath not  
given me over to death.’ (118<sup>th</sup> Psalm)

‘Twas as the solemn midnight hour,  
When minds at ease are sunk in sleep,  
But sorrow’s sons their wailings pour,  
Teaching the woods and wilds to weep;

Beside a lake whose waters black  
The pale-eyed moon doth dimly spy,  
Scarce peeping o’er a mountain back,  
That rudely lifts its head on high;

Where the wild willows green and dank  
Their weeping heads wave to and fro;  
And bending reeds upon its bank  
Oft kiss the stream that runs below—

There, on a long-fall’n mould’ring mass  
An ancient castle’s crumbling wall,  
That, now grown o’er with weeds and grass,  
Was once gay mirth’s and beauty’s hall,

Ierne, lonely, pale, and sad,  
All hapless sighing, sat her down,  
And sorrowing mused, till almost mad,  
She snatched her harp her cares to drown.

Now wildly waved her auburn hair  
In the unheeded blast that blew;  
Fixed were her eyes in deep despair,  
Whilst o’er the strings her fingers flew.

The sounds, at first so loud and wild,  
Now slowly softened on the ear;  
And e'en the savage blast grew mild,  
Such soothing sounds well pleased to hear.

Her druids' ghosts around her throng—  
For ling'ring still, tho' seldom seen,  
They fondly flit the oaks among,  
And haunt the grove for ever green;

And list'ning fairies troop around,  
Whilst high upon the ivied tow'r,  
The long-haired banshees catch the sound,  
And rapt, forget their crying hour.

For, in the saddest, softest strain,  
She wail'd the woes of Erin's land—  
Ah! wretched Erin, rent in twain  
By some curs'd demon's hellish hand,

That aye inflames with deadly rage  
Sons against sons in foulest fight  
And youth to murder hoary age,  
In nature's and in reason's spite.

The cottage now she sings in flames,  
Now the injur'd maiden dying,  
And now the burning baby's screams  
To its mother's bosom flying;

Ah! luckless mother, vain you shed  
Thy tears or blood thy babe to save,  
For lo! poor soul, thy baby's dead,  
And now thy breast must be its grave!

Thy breast of life, where, as it slept,  
Thy song-sooth'd cherub oft would start;  
Then heav'd its little sighs, and wept—  
Sad sighs that rack'd thy boding heart.

The thought too deep Ierne stung—  
She started frantic from her seat,  
Her silver harp deep thrilling rung,  
Neglected, falling at her feet.

Nor silver harp Ierne cheers,  
Nor the bright starry-studded skies;  
The light of heaven's unseen through tears—  
The sweetest sound's unheard through sighs.

The withered shamrock from her breast,  
Scorch'd with her burning sighs, she threw,  
And the dark, deadly dew she pressed,  
Cold dripping with unhallowed dew.

'Here, here,' she cries, 'unseen I'll dwell,  
Here hopeless lay my tearful head,  
And fairies nightly in this cell  
Shall strew me dew-cold leafy bed.'

Then down she sinks with grief oppress'd  
Her saffron sleeve thrown o'er her face,  
And soft-winged sleep lights on her breast,  
And soothes its heavings into peace.

But ah! too soon, fell Discord's cries,  
Borne on an eastern breeze's wings,  
Rude sweep her harp, that downward lies,  
And moan amongst its trembling strings.

Scared with a sound he did not know,  
Peace-loving sleep dared not to stay,  
But, sighing for Ierne's woe,  
He bent his noiseless flight away.

Ierne, starting, paused a while:  
'Too true,' she cries, 'ye powers above!  
Dread Discord comes from that fair isle  
Where still I looked for peace and love.'

Thought-rapt she stood in dumb amaze,  
When on the western mountain's height,  
To sounds seraphic, rose a blaze  
Of mildly-beaming heavenly light.

There in the midst, loose rob'd was seen  
Sweet Hope, that soothes our ev'ry ill,  
Beck'ning with calm and smiling mien  
Poor, sad Ierne up the hill.

The woe-begone thus Hope address'd:  
'Lift up thy looks, Ierne, cheer!  
For know we come at heaven's behest  
To soothe thy sorrow, check thy fear.

'Thy cares, thy dangers soon shall cease,  
Thy days of tears and sighs are gone,  
Thou foulest feuds shall turn to peace—  
Thus shall the will of heav'n be done.

'Pluck from thy breast that yew away—  
Be steady, cool, collected, calm;  
So shalt thou soon a wreath display  
Of shamrock woven with the palm.'

Words so bland, as dew descending  
Lifts the drooping lily's head,  
Rais'd the fair Ierne bending,  
Fairest flow'r in nature's bed.

'My fervent thanks, high heav'n,' she cries,  
'Be ever, ever given to thee;  
Thou'st chas'd my sorrow, tears and sigh—  
Thou'st sent me Hope and Liberty.'

## GENIUS OF ERIN

Genius of Erin, tune thy harp  
To freedom, let its sound awake  
Thy prostrate sons, and nerve their hearts  
Oppression's iron bonds to break.

Long and strong then strike the lyre—  
Strike it with prophetic lays,  
Bid it rouse the slumbering fire,  
Bid the fire of freedom blaze.

Tell them glory waits their efforts—  
Strongly wooed, she will be won;  
Freedom, show, by peace attended,  
Waits to crown each gallant son.

Greatly daring, bid them gain her;  
Conquerors, bid them live or die;  
Erin in her children triumphs,  
Even where her martyrs lie.

But if her sons, too long opprest,  
No spark of freedom's fire retain,  
And with sad and servile breast,  
Basely wear the galling chain;

Vainly then you'd call to glory,  
Vainly freedom's blessing praise—  
Man debased to willing thraldom  
Freedom's blessing cannot raise.

Check thy hand, and change thy strain,  
Check it to a sound of woe,—  
Ireland's blasted hopes proclaim,  
Ireland's endless sufferings show.

Show her fields with blood ensanguined,  
With her children's blood bedewed—  
Show her desolated plains,  
With their murdered bodies strewed.

Mark that hamlet—how it blazes!  
Hear the shrieks of horror rise—  
See! the fiends prepare their tortures—  
See! a tortured victim dies.

Ruin stalks his haggard round,  
O'er the plains his banner waves,  
Sweeping from her wasted land  
All but tyrants and their slaves.

All but tyrants and their slaves!  
Shall they live in Erin's isle?  
O'er her martyred patriot's graves  
Shall oppression's minions smile?

Erin's sons, awake!—awake!  
Oh! too long, too long, you sleep;  
Awake! arise! your fetters break,  
Nor let your country bleed and weep.

## ARBOUR HILL

No rising column marks this spot  
Where many a victim lies,  
But oh! the blood which here has streamed  
To heaven for justice cries.

It claims it on the oppressor's head  
Who joys in human woe,  
Who drinks the tears by misery shed,  
And mocks them as they flow.

It claims it on the callous judge  
Whose hands in blood are dyed,  
Who arms injustice with the sword,  
The balance thrown aside.

It claims it for this ruined isle—  
Her wretched children's grave—  
Where withered Freedom droops her head,  
And man exists—a slave.

O sacred Justice! free this land  
From tyranny abhorred;  
Resume thy balance and thy seat,  
Resume, but sheath thy sword.

No retribution should we seek—  
Too long has horror reigned;  
By mercy marked may freedom rise,  
By cruelty unstained.



Nor shall a tyrant's ashes mix  
With those our martyred dead;  
This is the place where Erin's sons  
In Erin's cause have bled.

And those who here are laid at rest,  
Oh! hallowed be each name;  
Their memories are for ever blest—  
Consigned to endless fame.

Unconsecrated is this ground,  
Unblessed by holy hands—  
No bell here tolls its solemn sound—  
No monument here stands.

But here the patriot's tears are shed,  
The poor man's blessing given—  
These consecrate the virtuous dead,  
These waft their way to heaven.